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SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

27 OCTOBER 2016

(7.15 pm - 9.00 pm)

PRESENT: Councillors Abigail Jones (in the Chair), Stan Anderson, Michael Bull, David Chung, Janice Howard, Russell Makin, John Sargeant and Imran Uddin

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Daniel Holden, Hamish Badenoch, David Williams and Martin Whelton (Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing)

Mitra Dubet (Future Merton Commissioning Manager), Paul McGarry (FutureMerton Manager), James McGinlay (Head of Sustainable Communities) and Julia Regan (Head of Democracy Services)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Holden (who was substituted by Councillor Janice Howard) due to his involvement in presenting the call-in request.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

3 CALL-IN REPORT: BELVEDERE ROAD AND BELVEDERE GROVE EXPERIMENTAL WIDTH RESTRICTION REVIEW (Agenda Item 3)

The Chair invited Councillors Daniel Holden and Hamish Badenoch to explain why they had requested a call-in on this matter.

Councillor Daniel Holden said that traffic had been a longstanding issue for local residents and ward councillors in Wimbledon Village and Hillside and that traffic calming measures in nearby roads had resulted in traffic diverting to Belvedere Drive and Belvedere Grove. He said that ward councillors had received lots of complaints about traffic volume, speed and noise. He urged the Cabinet Member to continue to look for an equitable solution to these problems, particularly given the amount of time and money that had already been devoted to this.

Councillor Hamish Badenoch added that the issue had been highly contentious and that local residents' associations held differing views. He confirmed that the call-in request was not to ask for the experimental restrictions to remain but for the Cabinet Member to spend more time in consideration of alternatives such as a twenty mile per hour zone or "build outs" to deter traffic.

In response to questions from Panel members, Councillor Badenoch said that it was not his place to identify a preferred scheme but for officers to work on alternatives and to consider the impact of displacement from other traffic calming measures. He said that they did not support road closures. Councillor Holden added that the objective was to encourage through traffic to use main roads rather than residential streets.

The Chair invited representatives of residents' associations and a local resident to address the meeting:

Hilary Lewis-Ruttley, Murray Road North Residents' Association

Hilary Lewis-Ruttley said that the view of the Murray Road North Residents' Association was that the experimental restrictions had not been successful and should not be repeated. She said that they have similar experiences in the Ridgway and therefore have sympathy for residents in the Belvederes but also believe that people living near the High Street should expect and accept a higher volume of traffic.

The Murray Road North Residents' Association would like Belvedere Road and Belvedere Grove to be kept open because closure would make matters worse for other roads. Hilary Lewis-Ruttley urged the council to adopt a community contextual approach in discussion with businesses in Wimbledon Village to avoid restricting access to local businesses. She asked the council to consider measures such as a 20 MPH limit for the local area or for the whole borough, signage and other visible deterrence of the type seen in other village areas.

Susan Cusack, Belvedere Estate Residents' Association

Susan Cusack said that the Belvedere Estate Residents' Association agreed with the Cabinet Member's decision to end the experimental measures and to not undertake further volume surveys or traffic assessments for two years unless related to personal injury accidents and trends; and with his intention to look at the introduction of a 20 MPH zone. She said that they agree that there should be a holistic approach to traffic management and consideration of parking for customers to support local businesses.

Michael Weston, New Belvedere Estate Residents' Association

Michael Weston said that the New Belvedere Estate Residents Association considered that the main traffic problem in the Belvederes is volume rather than speed and that this has been exacerbated by traffic calming measures. He said that in their experience, and contrary to the accident report data, accidents are common in the area though not necessarily reported to the council.

The New Belvedere Estate Residents Association has carried out its own volume survey. This showed a marginal decline in volume overall but a significant reduction in heavy good vehicles which was most welcome. They wish to work with the council to discharge its duty to local residents by finding an effective solution.

In response to questions from Panel members Michael Weston said that they would like the Belvederes to remain as through roads but not to be used by through traffic. They would welcome effectively policed measures such as banned turns.

Fiona Cooper, Ridgway Place Residents' Association

Fiona Cooper said that the majority of Ridgway Place Residents' Association members were against width restriction in their area when consulted in 2014. Their main concern is the volume of traffic, especially heavy goods vehicles, which are numerous on the Ridgway despite restrictions being in place.

Fiona Cooper added that residents across the area all face the same situation and she encouraged the use of public transport to ameliorate this.

Suzanne Warre-Dymond, Community of Woodside Area Residents' Association

Suzanne Warre-Dymond said that it was the view of the Community of Woodside Area Residents' Association that the temporary width restrictions should be discontinued because they had delivered minimal benefit and been costly to maintain. They believe that other areas are worse affected and that a disproportionate amount of resources has been spent in the Village area in response to vocal residents. Suzanne Warre-Dymond said that as Woodside should have speed restrictions because it is the longest straightest residential road in the ward and therefore suffers from speeding traffic.

In response to questions, Suzanne Warre-Dymond noted that crossrail2 will have a large impact and that she like the idea of signage for residential areas such as those used in parts of Kingston.

Steven Turnbull, resident in Belvedere Drive

Steven Turnbull said that ward councillors were best placed to balance the competing demand of local residents and that he was disappointed that the decision to remove the temporary width restriction has undone the good work to find a compromise. His view was that vandalism and damage was not a sufficient justification for removal. He said that for the most part the restrictions had been complied with and had been effective in preventing heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) using those roads. He said that there is support for the roads to remain open but not for use by HGVs or through traffic, that measures elsewhere had had a negative impact and that he would like traffic to return to the main roads.

The Chair invited Councillor Martin Whelton, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing to respond to points made by the call-in signatories and witnesses.

Councillor Whelton said that the decision had been a difficult one due to the long history, many conflicting viewpoints amongst local residents and the lack of an easy solution. He thought that any subsequent proposal would be likely to meet with dissent from some of the resident groups in the area. He expressed sympathy for affected residents but said that he had to consider the needs of the whole borough and work within a tight budget.

Councillor Whelton said that he had made the decision based on evidence that the temporary measures had not worked and in response to representations from residents who had been adversely affected by them. He added that he was open to suggestions for a solution, that junction entry points (i.e. speed humps on entry to street) could be reviewed and that he supported the aspiration to have a 20MPH zone borough-wide.

Council officers, James McGinlay (Head of Sustainable Communities), Paul McGarry (Head of Future Merton) and Mitra Dubet (Future Merton Commissioning Manager) made additional points in response to questions:

- At present measures to reduce speed are concentrated on areas outside schools. If funding did become available then a 20MPH zone would be likely to be rolled out incrementally across the borough, prioritised according to speed and accident data.
- Home zones and shared space zones have been trialled in the borough. These work best in small spaces, cul-de-sacs and town centres with high volume of pedestrians and therefore probably not suited to the Belvederes.
- Width restrictions have to be removable to allow emergency vehicles through
- HGVs are permitted access within an area that is subject to a lorry ban thereby making enforcement very difficult. Enforcing a lorry ban is resource intensive – have to stop vehicles to check destination and / or have cameras to identify destination. Currently the Council does not have the powers to enforce a lorry ban. The traffic survey showed a fairly low level of HGV vehicles in the area..
- The pre survey was carried out in week commencing 19 September and post survey in week beginning 9 January. The choice of dates represents normal practice and enabled time to consider results prior to making a decision about the scheme.
- Speed humps on entry to the Belvederes would slow traffic down but wouldn't prevent through traffic or HGVs from using the route – as speed is not an issue in the Belvederes this would not be an appropriate solution
- Cost of traffic volume surveys range from £250-300 when tubes on road are used to £1500 per camera if radar cameras are used. Total cost including analysis of data would be in region of £3500 for one site.

Panel members discussed the points raised by the call-in signatories, witnesses, officers and Cabinet Member.

The Panel noted the differences of opinion amongst local residents associations. The Panel agreed that this is a difficult and complex matter and that the main problem appears to be use of residential roads by heavy goods vehicles and other through

traffic rather than excessive speed. Panel members also agreed that traffic management issues should be dealt with holistically across the whole area rather than focussing on Belvedere Grove and Belvedere Drive. They noted that the Cabinet Member had acknowledged the need for a wider solution.

Panel members had differing views on whether the council should continue to pursue traffic calming measures on Belvedere Grove and Belvedere Drive within the next twenty four months. They also had differing views on whether the introduction of 20 MPH zones would result in slower moving traffic.

It was moved and seconded that the Panel should decide not to refer the matter back to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing. Five members voted in favour and 2 members voted against. The Panel therefore RESOLVED to not refer back to the Cabinet Member, in which case the Cabinet Member's decisions shall take effect immediately.

Panel members discussed whether to make a reference to the Cabinet Member asking him to consider what steps could be taken such as signage on key roads and improved junction treatment to create a visual impact to encourage drivers to drive more slowly and carefully. Also discussed whether to ask him to continue to monitor traffic volume over the next 24 months.

James McGinlay said that the decision to review in 24 months formed part of a borough wide programme of activities that were constantly reviewed and informed primarily by accident data.

It was moved and seconded that the Panel should make a reference to ask the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing to consider the implementation of physical changes such as signage similar to the type already in place in other parts of the borough and improved junction treatment over an appropriate timescale so that the impact can be assessed when the next traffic volume survey is carried out in 24 months.

Six members voted in favour and 1 member voted against. The Panel therefore RESOLVED to make a reference to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing that would include the wording of the resolution plus a description of the Panel's discussion.